

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**  
**DISTRICT OF NEVADA**

LAWRENCE TOWNSEND,

Plaintiff

v.

BARRETT, et al.,

Defendants

Case No.: 2:23-cv-01813-APG-BNW

**Order**

Plaintiff Lawrence Townsend brings this civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 to redress constitutional violations that he claims he suffered while incarcerated at High Desert State Prison. ECF No. 8 at 1. On September 4, 2024, the magistrate judge ordered Townsend to update his address and file an application to proceed *in forma pauperis* for non-prisoners by October 4, 2024. ECF No. 14 at 1–2. That deadline expired without an updated address and an application to proceed *in forma pauperis* for non-prisoners from Townsend, and his mail from the court is being returned as undeliverable. *See* ECF No. 17.

**I. Discussion**

District courts have the inherent power to control their dockets and “[i]n the exercise of that power, they may impose sanctions including, where appropriate . . . dismissal” of a case. *Thompson v. Hous. Auth. of City of Los Angeles*, 782 F.2d 829, 831 (9th Cir. 1986). A court may dismiss an action based on a party’s failure to obey a court order or comply with local rules. *See Carey v. King*, 856 F.2d 1439, 1440–41 (9th Cir. 1988) (affirming dismissal for failure to comply with local rule requiring *pro se* plaintiffs to keep court apprised of address); *Malone v. U.S. Postal Service*, 833 F.2d 128, 130 (9th Cir. 1987) (dismissal for failure to comply with court order). In determining whether to dismiss an action on one of these grounds, I must consider: (1)

1 the public’s interest in expeditious resolution of litigation; (2) the court’s need to manage its  
2 docket; (3) the risk of prejudice to the defendants; (4) the public policy favoring disposition of  
3 cases on their merits; and (5) the availability of less drastic alternatives. *See In re*  
4 *Phenylpropanolamine Prod. Liab. Litig.*, 460 F.3d 1217, 1226 (9th Cir. 2006) (quoting *Malone*  
5 *v. U.S. Postal Serv.*, 833 F.2d 128, 130 (9th Cir. 1987)).

6 The first two factors, the public’s interest in expeditiously resolving this litigation and the  
7 court’s interest in managing its docket, weigh in favor of dismissal of Townsend’s claims. The  
8 third factor, risk of prejudice to defendants, also weighs in favor of dismissal because a  
9 presumption of injury arises from the occurrence of unreasonable delay in filing a pleading  
10 ordered by the court or prosecuting an action. *See Anderson v. Air West*, 542 F.2d 522, 524 (9th  
11 Cir. 1976). The fourth factor—the public policy favoring disposition of cases on their merits—is  
12 greatly outweighed by the factors favoring dismissal.

13 The fifth factor requires me to consider whether less drastic alternatives can be used to  
14 correct the party’s failure that brought about the court’s need to consider dismissal. *See Yourish*  
15 *v. Cal. Amplifier*, 191 F.3d 983, 992 (9th Cir. 1999) (explaining that considering less drastic  
16 alternatives *before* the party has disobeyed a court order does not satisfy this factor); *accord*  
17 *Pagtalunan v. Galaza*, 291 F.3d 639, 643 & n.4 (9th Cir. 2002) (explaining that “the persuasive  
18 force of” earlier Ninth Circuit cases that “implicitly accepted pursuit of less drastic alternatives  
19 prior to disobedience of the court’s order as satisfying this element[,]” *i.e.*, like the “initial  
20 granting of leave to amend coupled with the warning of dismissal for failure to comply[,]” have  
21 been “eroded” by *Yourish*). Courts “need not exhaust every sanction short of dismissal before  
22 finally dismissing a case, but must explore possible and meaningful alternatives.” *Henderson v.*  
23 *Duncan*, 779 F.2d 1421, 1424 (9th Cir. 1986). Because this action cannot realistically proceed

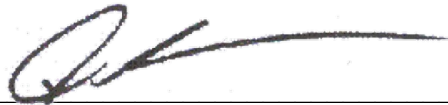
1 without the ability for the court and the defendants to send Townsend case-related documents,  
2 filings, and orders, the only alternative is to enter a second order setting another deadline. But  
3 without an updated address, the likelihood that the second order would even reach Townsend is  
4 low, so issuing a second order will only delay the inevitable and further squander the court's  
5 finite resources. Setting another deadline is not a meaningful alternative given these  
6 circumstances. So the fifth factor favors dismissal.

7 **II. Conclusion**

8 Having thoroughly considered these dismissal factors, I find that they weigh in favor of  
9 dismissal. It is therefore ordered that this action is dismissed without prejudice based on  
10 Townsend's failure to file an updated address and an application to proceed *in forma pauperis*  
11 for non-prisoners in compliance with this court's September 4, 2024, order. The Clerk of Court is  
12 directed to enter judgment accordingly and close this case. No other documents may be filed in  
13 this now-closed case. If Townsend wishes to pursue his claims, he must file a complaint in a new  
14 case, provide the court with his current address, and file an application to proceed *in forma*  
15 *pauperis* for non-prisoners or pay the full filing fee.

16 I further order that the order setting the Inmate Early Mediation Conference (ECF No.  
17 16) is **VACATED**, and the mediation set on **October 11, 2024**, is **CANCELED**.

18 Dated: October 7, 2024

19   
20 \_\_\_\_\_  
21 U.S. District Judge  
22  
23